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SPOTS and STRIPES

Vol. 4, No. 3



Autumn 1967



Thelma keeps a watchful eye on her (and the Zoo's) first-born black rhinoceros.

Photograph from Smithsonian Institution.

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IT'S A BOY

The most important African black rhino in captivity was born in the National Zoo at 4:09 p.m. August 31. Name: Dillon.

A bouncing baby, in every sense of the word. His reluctant arrival kept us all on pins and needles from August 18 to 31, but Dillon finally popped into the world as if shot from a cannon.

Thelma gave birth to him standing — the case in four of the five documented black-rhino births, and if Dillon didn't actually bounce off the floor of the cage I'll eat the Pregnancy Watch Log.

Seventy pounds, 44 inches from nose to tail, and all boy! Thelma, some 2,500 pounds of maternal solicitude, took her front horn to Dillon at once, trying to lift him to his feet. In a few hours he had gained his wobbly legs on his own and was suckling like a veteran.

The blessed event was a somewhat public affair. The cheering section of about 35 excited people included Zoo Director Theodore Reed, Mrs. Reed, staff members and keepers, and a few lucky Friends of the National Zoo who'd gotten the word via the underground.

Like wise men from the east, well-wishers started coming to pay homage. In late afternoon, Dr. Leonard Carmichael, former Secretary of the Smithsonian, loped into the large mammal house with Mrs. Carmichael and a rhino-loving lady from California in tow. (Dr. Carmichael's National Geographic chauffeur appeared with a camera, and found a place at the guard rail with other photographers.) Next morning, Peggy Barrett brought daisies.

Dillon arrived a celebrity, of course, the National Zoo's first-born rhino of any species. He is the 13th black rhino born in American zoos and the 37th in world zoodom.

Since no Dr. Spock exists for black rhinos (only five births have been fully documented), the Zoo staff was understandably prayerful about Thelma's interesting condition.

On August 18, some 15 months after Breeding Day, Thelma showed unmistakable

external signs of giving birth. It was a Friday afternoon. The weekend loomed.

Warren Iliff, secretary of the Friends of the National Zoo, quickly organized their second Pregnancy Watch. Some 25 veterans of the Lion Pregnancy Watch were on his list; 20 other people had volunteered in response to a notice in SPOTS AND STRIPES. Ultimately, the Pregnancy Watch involved 57 willing midwives and uncounted cups of black coffee.

Friends of the National Zoo sat with Thelma from 6 p. m. to 7 a. m. on weekdays and around the clock on weekends.

One doubts that any black rhino's actions during her final two weeks of pregnancy have been more closely observed—and with more sympathy—than Thelma's. While Tony slept like a peaceful mountain in the adjoining cage, Thelma suffered many restless nights. Her tiny, weak eyes seemed to recede ever more wearily into her circlets of wrinkles.

Here is a typical entry from the Pregnancy Watch Log, night of August 22, observations by Warren Iliff:

12:50 a.m. — Thelma up.
12:55 — Down.
1:00 — Up and moving about cage.
1:15 — Urinates.
1:20 — Lies down.
2:25 — Up.
2:50 — Lies down.

I served three of the late-night watches, once alone and twice with a friend, a young Brazilian naturalist named Arnold Queiroz.

It's a rare and wonderful experience to baby-sit a pregnant rhino in the great shadowed cavern of the large mammal house during the still hours of a hot summer night. The silence is heavy. You don't forget that the quiet dark masses behind bars are some of earth's most spectacular animals — rhinos, elephants, hippos, giraffes. Their gamy scent hangs like mist in the air. Flies buzz. At times there is no other sound. A cockroach scuttles across the damp concrete floor.

Some nights the animals were restless. This entry appears in the Log just after midnight on August 26:

1:45 a. m. - There's quite a lot of activity in the large mammal house tonight. All the rhinos are up. Tarun, the Indian rhino, is banging the metal sliding door at the back of his cage. Thelma has a noisy, sloshy drink of water; manicures horn against the wooden post in her cage.

On the evening of the 26th, Brenda Hall and Dana Horsemen made these observations:

7:35 p. m. - Thelma browsing with hind-quarters facing front of cage; kept standing in this position until 7:53, browsing once in a while. Noted secretion of white mucous from vaginal opening (small amount).

8:57 p. m. - Thelma finally lay down, heaved a big sigh.

That same night Sara Koonce, Howard and Caryl Clarke reported:

11 p. m. - Dr. Reed arrived, looked Thelma over and commented that it was difficult to understand how she could hold it in her any longer. He believes she will deliver in a standing position, and said that she may just give a grunt and deliver - it's possible for it to be that fast!

August 29, 8:02 p. m. (Gerry Kurula and Mrs. Audrey Habermann):

"Thelma gave two jerks as if in pain."

The last entry in the Pregnancy Watch Log was at 6:45 a. m. on the 31st: "She's been pacing restlessly since 6 a. m. with tail erect. Now and then she paws the cage with her back legs."

At 7 a. m. Zoo staffers began streaming into the large mammal house. Throughout the day Mrs. Sybil Hamlet, the Zoo's public information assistant, took meticulous notes on Thelma's actions. Everyone felt that August 31 had to be The Day - and it was.

Dr. Reed invited the Pregnancy Watch volunteers for a special preview of Dillon, named by Mrs. S. Dillon Ripley, wife of the Smithsonian Secretary, on the evening of September 1.

At one month, Dillon is the picture of health. He gambols like a lamb, weighs about

150 pounds, and nibbles hay. His front horn has popped through; the second, while still a button, is on its way.

Zoo Friends who missed taking part in the Rhino Pregnancy Watch can take cheer. Marg, the giraffe, is expecting soon. Smile, you may get a call from Warren Iliff:

"Say, can you help us out? How about tomorrow at 4 a. m.?"

- Matt McDade

* * * * *

Nursery Chant of Dillon, the Baby Rhinoceros

Some worry lest our line go Extinct just like the dino;
Man's habits aren't so fine though,
He may blow before the rhino.

- Jocelyn Arundel

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SEALS AND SEA-LIONS

The summer of 1967 was special for the National Zoo sea-lions. There were fun and games at meal time, and anyone knows that sea-lions like that. Friends of the National Zoo had arranged to operate a fish-vending cart. For a dime at feeding hours, zoo goers could have the rare opportunity of buying a fish, tossing it to the delighted barking sea mammals in their tree-shaded pond below the bear line. The sea-lions must have thought the human beings had at last come to their senses.

Most people who have seen "seal" acts performed by sea-lions are fated to a lifetime of confusion about the difference between seals and sea-lions. A few pointers follow.

Sea-lions belong to a general grouping of pinnipeds that have small external ears. Fur seals also belong to this group. These eared seals are especially distinguished by their manoeuverable hind limbs which can rotate forward to help them move about on land with

a fair degree of efficiency. Their forelimbs and necks are longer than those of the so-called true seals. Sea-lions are the ones with the gay-spirited barking cry, so familiar to all zoo-goers. The California sea-lion is the versatile performer most often used in circus acts. The gay quartet in the large pond below the bear enclosures are of this variety.

The rest of sealdom lacks the external ear structure. Except for the doughty walrus, members of this group are true seals in the sense that they are superbly trimmed for life in the water but are so awkward on land that they are virtually helpless. Their hind limbs are permanently directed backwards and cannot rotate forward to propel them on land. Harbor seals and harp seals are typical of this group, which ranges from temperate to colder seas of both Northern and Southern hemispheres. At the National Zoo the two harbor seals outside the lion house are representative of the earless, or true seal group.

Walruses, too, are earless seals but are exceptional. Like the sea-lions they are able to rotate their hind limbs, albeit less efficiently than the typical sea-lion or fur seal.

Altogether there are 31 species of seals, sea-lions and walruses to liven the world's seas. They comprise the distinct zoological group called the pinnipeds. Evolution sees them returning to a watery life from a much earlier existence on land.

All pinnipeds are born on land. They are true warm-blooded mammals that must surface regularly to breathe, and must leave the water to rest, breed, and bear their young. Seals as well as sea-lions seem to be born with some dim recollection of a more terrestrial way of life. The newborn don't take readily to water. According to observers young seals often put off their first wet plunge as long as they can. Once launched, however, the true seal soon learns what its flippers are for. Sea-lions, however, are less apt and must be taught to swim.

Last year, NZP staffers learned at first hand that baby sea-lions need swimming lessons. In the spring, Loo-Seal was born. All charm with her luminous eyes, soft coat and eager little flippers she seemed an irresistible little item on the zoological agenda.

Evidently, however, she was not what her mother had in mind. Deserted, little Loo-Seal became a foster child of the zoo staff. Medical technologist Jan Davis coaxed the baby sea-lion to accept a diet of Esbilac and chopped smelt (minus the heads), and she thrived. The usual NZP brand of scientific skill and TLC was laced with pampering. Understandable. When a month old, Loo-Seal's swimming lessons began. They are best described by the wording of the National Zoological Park's 1966 annual report:

"The Zoo's baby, known as Loo-Seal, was given her first swimming lesson when she was four weeks old in the indoor hippopotamus pool scrubbed and filled with clean water for the lesson. When Dr. Gray and Mrs. Davis first took the young animal into the water, it promptly sank to the bottom, but in a surprisingly short fifteen or twenty minutes it got the idea, and swam swiftly if sometimes awkwardly back and forth between its foster parents with obvious enjoyment. The lessons were continued until Loo-Seal was completely at home in the water."

As the chilly days of Fall close in, the zoo-faithful youngsters who especially loved tossing fish to the sea-lions are closeted with their schoolwork. The vending cart will drift into a part-time weekend schedule. The sea-lions will eat as well as usual but without the splashing diving games with visitors. As for the two harbor seals in their pond outside the lion house, they will stage their remarkable shows of aquatic skills as usual, but all too often visitors wrapped in coats will hurry past toward the warmth of heated buildings. Those who do pause to watch, whatever the weather, are always well rewarded.

—Jocelyn Arundel

* * * * *

Charles Darwin in "The Voyage of H. M. S. Beagle" says of fur seals: "They appeared to be of a loving disposition, and lay huddled together, fast asleep, like so many pigs."

In chapter three of "The Whispering Land" Gerald Durrell has this to say: "Whereas their husbands were enormous blundering tanks of animals, the wives were slim, sinuous and sexy, with their neat pointed faces

and big melting eyes. They were the personification of femininity, graceful to a degree, beautiful, coquettish and at the same time loving. They were heavenly creatures, and I decided that should I ever have the chance of being an animal in this world I would choose to be a fur seal so that I might enjoy having such a wonderful wife."

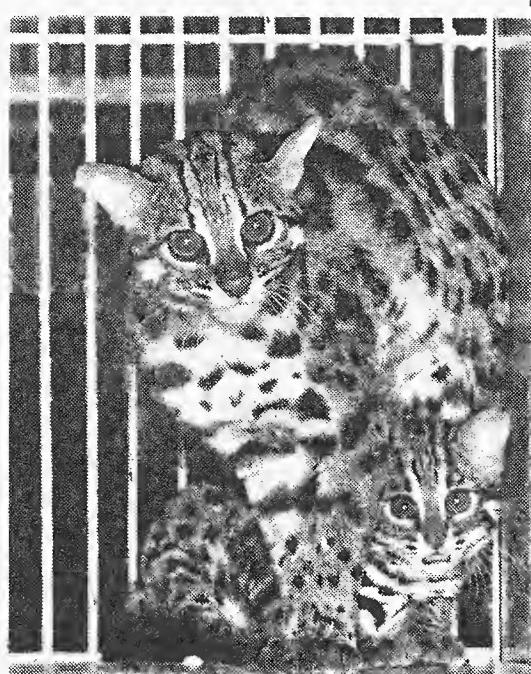
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THE SMALL CATS

Too often is *Felis* overlooked in favor of his larger brother *Panthera* – in the literature as well as in the flesh. This very dichotomy makes these small cats amongst the most fascinating of all the Felidae – they look a lot like kitty-at-home and yet, no, they don't. What, really, are they?

As a point of reference, let us first examine the better-known of these species – better known because of an upsurge in recent years in the sale of "exotic" housepets.

MARGAY: This is a New World cat that once ranged up into the southwestern United States but is now almost never found there. The Mexicans call it "tigrillo," although it much more resembles a small edition of an ocelot with a long tail. Not that it is necessarily small – large males may grow to four feet in length (of which 20 inches is tail) and weigh up to 35 pounds. Females tend to be shorter and slimmer, with a relatively longer tail-to-body length. Basic color varies with area: in Mexico grey forms occur; farther south they become tawny; and in Nicaragua the usually white underbelly is yellow. However, all have sharply defined circular dark markings on the body, tending toward vertical bands on the shoulders. The ears are fairly



Baby leopard cat
with its mother

(Smithsonian photo)

small but the eyes are large and dark. Oddly enough, though popular as apartment pets in the States, little is known of the margay in the wild – it is a forest animal and probably nocturnal, preying on rodents, birds, and occasionally on chickens.

SERVAL: This is an African cat, ranging south of the Sahara. I have known of people who kept these cats as pets in Kenya, but "kept" is here the key word – servals seem tamable only so long as they can also be allowed to keep their basic wildness and have the scope to do so. Resembling a miniature cheetah, servals have long legs, an elongated neck, small head, and big ears that almost meet at the skull and act as parabolic reflectors for sounds during their nocturnal hunts. They hunt a wide variety of prey and are expert climbers. Adults may stand almost two feet high at the shoulder, be four feet long (including a short tail) and weigh 35 pounds. Their typical color pattern is tawny with black spots, but in the high mountains of Kenya and Ethiopia black-coated melanistic forms have been found. Should you hear a serval call, it might sound like "how-how-how" or perhaps "mwa-mwa-mwa."

A proud young serval,
in a pensive mood

"OSA"

(NZP photo)



LEOPARD CAT: This is another fairly common species. Strictly an Asiatic cat, it gets its name from its leopard-like appearance, although it is more like a large tabby in size – one to two feet in length with another foot of tail and moderately large ears. It is, again, a nocturnal animal and feeds on birds and small mammals, dropping on them from trees as its namesake does. Armand Denis has described its typical stance as "forelegs stiff and straight, head up, back sloping away, hindquarters close to the ground, and hind legs stretched out behind, apparently supporting nothing." The first specimen ever found was picked up from a river near Calcutta in the 18th century; he was kept alive and later mated with domestic cats, and one report stated that his progeny could "swim just as well as he could."

FISHING CAT: Yet another Asian, and aquatic cat, is the fishing cat. This is a short-limbed, tabby-sized cat up to one and a half feet long (plus foot-long tail) and weighing up to 25 pounds. It seems to be fairly widespread in Asia, but patchily, since it lives in thick jungle and always near water. Authorities are divided about its actual "fishing" ability; it has been seen standing on rocks and scooping up fish with its paws, but then, so have many other cats. It does not seem to enter the water to fish and subsists also on fresh-water mollusks. The fishing cat is reported to be extremely ferocious: there have been accounts of its attacking animals many times larger than itself, and one tells of a newly captured male that broke into an adjoining cage and attacked and killed a leopard.

GOLDEN CAT: Probably the one species that reminds people most of the garden-variety domestic shorthair is the golden cat. It occurs both in Asia and in Africa; NZP's resident is Asian. The golden cat is one of the few Felidae which have an elaborate facial pattern along with an almost plain body coloration; its head is marked with black, grey and white stripes, while its body has a ground color of rich golden brown. However, color forms can be extremely variable—black and grey examples have been known, and the race in China is said to have strongly marked lines and rosettes all over its body. It may range up to three feet in length, plus a long tail. Its prey probably includes rodents and small mammals, but it may well also include small deer. Most of the specimens shot have been done-in whilst raiding domestic cattle. Nonetheless, it is apparently quite tamable. London's Zoo had one trained by a previous owner to jump and catch a tennis ball six feet in the air and retrieve it; it even did so on TV despite the distractions of lights and cameras.

BLACK-FOOTED CAT: This rare species, whose range now seems confined to South Africa and the Kalahari, was recently acquired by the National Zoo when Marion McCrane traveled to Pretoria to get it. It is a small cat, almost smaller than the house-cat. Neither its ears nor its eyes are particularly distinctive, but it has the genus spots, dark on a pale tawny coat, and a relatively short thick tail with black tip. Its name, however, does not derive from black fur on its feet, but from its totally black foot pads. This

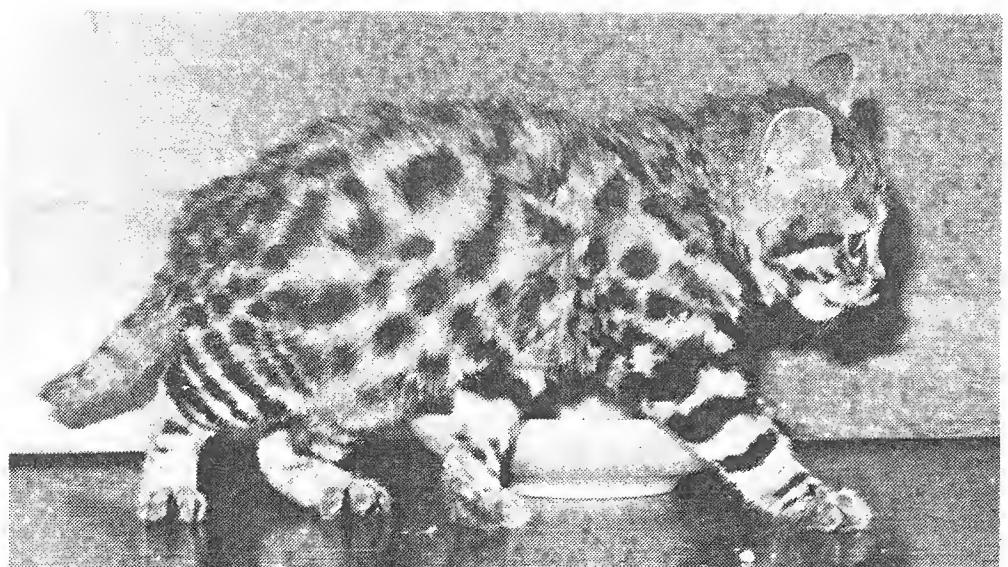
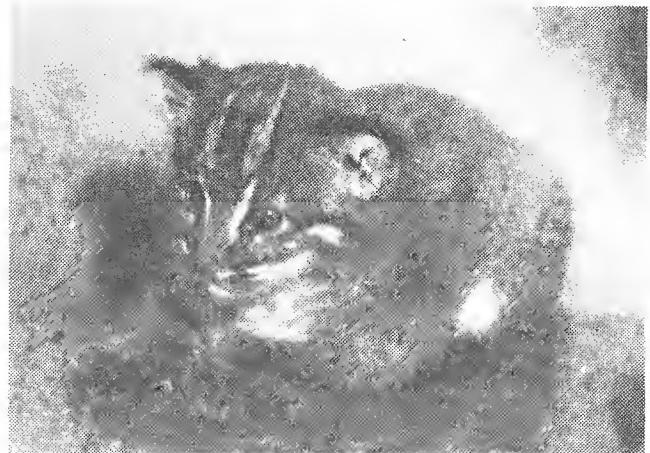
cat has been successfully crossbred with domestic cats.

The JUNGLE CAT is another about which little has been recorded. It is an Asian cat, rather tabby-looking, with, however, larger ears, slightly tufted, and a distinct crest of hair along the back. Its color ranges from grey to tawny with indistinct tabby spots. But it is somewhat larger than the ordinary house-cat, standing 15 inches at the shoulder and slightly over three feet in length (including tail) and weighing up to 20 pounds.

Baby golden cat

(NZP photo)

"Timmy"



Black-footed kitten, hand-reared at the Zoo
"Poco"

(Smithsonian photo)

The JAGUARONDI — a New World cat as is its namesake, the jaguar, but there all resemblance ends. Indeed, the jaguarondi looks more than anything else like an enlarged otter, with its elongated body, long low head, and small ears. Even its body color is atypical Felis — unspotted and varying from grey to chestnut red; and while three to four feet long (plus long tail) the animal stands only a foot high. It is an excellent swimmer and, in fact, is known as the otter-cat in Mexico. Jaguarondis are active around the clock, hunting along favorite ground trails where they are easily trapped. Though not particularly rare there is still much unknown about this cat — including its gestation period, which some authorities hold to be as long as nine months.

—Jean McConville

OUR (BIOLOGICAL) OTHER HALF

Understandably, the Zoo's fauna steals the spotlight from its flora, but hardly a day goes by without someone commenting on the beauty of the grounds—the trim lawns, profuse flower beds, and magnificent trees. The man mainly responsible for the meticulous care and grooming of the Zoo's arboricultural and horticultural side is NZP Head Gardener John (Jack) W. Monday.

Jack filled this position on March 16, 1964, after 14-1/2 years as Assistant Head Gardener for the D. C. Water Department. He also chalks up two additional years in government service in the form of military time, including a 16-month tour of duty in Korea. Since then, Jack has spent more than 14 years as an Army reservist.

Jack Monday "likes the variety and outdoor life" his profession affords, and in keeping with this, loves sports—particularly softball and tennis, at which he is a two-time club tournament winner.

Jack is a bona fide native, born and raised on a farm in Rockville, so he comes by his green thumb naturally. To keep the 165 acres of the NZP neat, trim and beautiful, Jack has two lead foremen and a peak staff of 26 personnel in summer, 15 during the off season. He is a member of the National Association of Professional Gardeners and the American Horticultural Society.

Our landscape is certainly blooming, and Dr. Reed is frequently heard to say that "despite the construction, the Zoo has never looked better!"

Keep up the good work, Mr. M.

— Marion McCrane

THE BOOK SHELF

Life of the Kangaroo, by Stanley and Kay Breeden. Taplinger, New York, 1967. 80 pp. illus. \$4.95.

Stanley and Kay Breeden are professional photographers of wildlife, and have contributed articles and photographs to many

magazines, including the *National Geographic* and *Natural History*. This slim volume is the result of three years of work on Bribie Island in Moreton Bay, southeast Queensland, Australia, and the photographs, almost exclusively of the great grey kangaroo, are magnificent and quite worth the price of the book.

On Bribie "the grey kangaroo, proud, tall and unafraid, dominates the island's wildlife. Bribie's native kangaroos are unique, they let people approach within feet. This is their story."

The Breedens give fascinating details of the life of the grey kangaroo—how it is born, how it gets into the pouch, its life in the pouch and its early exploration of the outside world. The social activities of the mob (as a group of kangaroos are called), the fighting of the adult males, are described in detail.

Written in a popular style, for the layman, "*The Life of the Kangaroo*" should appeal to young and old.

Studying Our Fellow Mammals, by Ernest P. Walker. Animal Welfare Institute, New York. 174 pp. illus. \$1.00

Ernest P. Walker, a charter member of the Friends of the National Zoo and a former assistant director of the NZP, is the author of a three-volume work on "Mammals of the World." During a long lifetime of studying animals, Mr. Walker constantly made notes of his observations and these he intended to include in his monumental work. The publishers, however, rejected this material and it has now been assembled and printed by the Animal Welfare Institute. It covers a multitude of subjects: animal behavior, intelligence, anatomy, distribution, and care of captive animals, and the book is profusely illustrated.

— L.Q.M.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

On Wednesday, August 9th, three scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx tao*) arrived to swell the population in the new delicate hoofed-stock area. The one male and two females (named Leo, Helen and Mary by Headkeeper Sonny



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Stroman) are definitely equanimitous types that placidly accepted their new quarters with dignity. On arrival they were a little on the slim side, but after all, they had just completed a long, exhausting trip — capture in North Africa, quarantine abroad, shipment to the States, another 30-day quarantine at Clifton, New Jersey, and then trucking to Washington. Nevertheless, the last hoof was hardly out of the crate when all three started contentedly munching hay.

There are four species of oryx (stout-bodied African antelope with pronounced facial markings), but the scimitar-horned, found in open deserts from Nigeria to Libya and the Sudan, is the only one with curved backward-sweeping horns. Although more plentiful than the extremely rare Arabian oryx that has received so much conservation publicity in recent years, the scimitar-horned is also a "vanishing animal" — on the IUCN endangered



list — so the Zoo is particularly pleased to have this fine trio. May they follow the good example set by their neighbors, the dorcas gazelles, and multiply tenfold — 'til the paddock fences bulge.

— Marion McCrane

Margaret Harlan, Vice President of the FONZ, shows Editor Lucile Mann two of the items on sale at the kiosk. It is said that nobody wearing the lapel pin, which bears the words "I am a Friend of the National Zoo", has yet been chewed by a tiger.



(Photograph by Washington Daily News)

The kiosk will be open every pleasant weekend during the fall and winter, and Friends are invited to stop by and select items suitable for Christmas gifts. The white-tiger ties, which sold out last year, have been re-ordered, and as a new item FONZ is offering specially designed Christmas wrapping paper. Watch for samples in the mail.